



# Taking Advantage of the Opportunity Cost of Equality

## *The Alliance for Women and The South Carolina Commission on Women*

BY  
**DR. CAROLINE WHITSON, PRESIDENT,  
COLUMBIA COLLEGE**

**DR. LILLY FILLER, CHAIR,  
SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION  
ON WOMEN**

**DR. LINDA SALANE,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE AT  
COLUMBIA COLLEGE**

Photo: Kristin Badger, Charleston  
Chamber of Commerce, Executive  
Director, Fast Forward, Charleston

Evelyn Perry, CEO Carolina  
Sound, MUZAK, Charleston

Linda Salane, Executive Director,  
The Leadership Institute at  
Columbia College, Columbia

Mary Baskins Waters, CEO,  
Albion Research and past chair SC  
Commission on Women, Columbia

Diane Sumpter, CEO DESA, Columbia

**I**magine what South Carolina could do for schools, highways, police and overall citizen services with an extra billion dollars.

According to a study commissioned by the Columbia College Alliance for Women and conducted by the Moore School of Business, if South Carolina women's salaries and labor force participation were equal to men's, the total impact to the state's economy would be \$13.4 billion, an amount that rivals the impact of the tourism industry. Total equality would mean an extra 144 thousand jobs in South Carolina. And total equality would mean increased tax revenue of one billion dollars annually. To put those numbers in perspective, the 2005-06 budget of South Carolina was a little more than \$18 billion.

Although it is invigorating to imagine a world of complete economic equality, it is not realistic to believe we will achieve total economic autonomy in a short time frame. But we can achieve a 10% change in the indicators of pay equity and labor force participation. A 10% improvement in those two

indicators would mean a total economic impact of \$1.4 billion, 15,000 new jobs, and an additional \$104 million annually in new tax revenue for all South Carolinians.

And think what it would mean to every woman in South Carolina to achieve economic autonomy. She could afford health insurance and would pursue healthcare. She would have resources to continue her education, strive for promotions, and expand her career choices to include opportunities at the highest levels of business and government. She could start and grow a business. She would be able to plan for retirement. Thousands of women could escape poverty and abusive environments. Imagine South Carolina leading the southeast in this 21st century renaissance.

As we enter the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, The Columbia College Alliance for Women and the Governor's South Carolina Commission on Women have committed their collective imaginations to creative action to achieve a simple, measurable and important goal-improvement in the status of women.

*Alliance on Women continued on page 20*



While simple to articulate, the goal of equality has eluded South Carolina's citizens for many years. But today there is a team of organizations and individuals working together to achieve a bold vision: equality for all citizens, economic dynamism for the state, and excellence in every aspect of the lives of South Carolina's citizens.

That team began with a strong and distinctive public-private partnership between Columbia College and the Governor's Office South Carolina Commission on Women. This partnership, formed by a memorandum of understanding in August 2004, paved the way for the development of The Alliance for Women, a coalition of concerned South Carolinians working to improve the standard of living for all South Carolina's citizens by supporting enhanced economic autonomy, health and well-being and political participation for the state's women. Working with the appointed Commission on Women, The Alliance for Women developed a plan for targeted change.

In 2004, despite many studies on the status of women in South Carolina, the indicators of the status of women were getting progressively worse. The status of women was not a state priority nor was it identified by key leaders as needing urgent attention. For change to occur, the limited status of women had to be aligned with pressing state priorities. Thanks to funding from The New Morning Foundation, The Alliance for Women commissioned the Moore School of Business to conduct the economic impact study to identify the cost to the state of the limited status of women.

Based on the data from the 2005 study, The Alliance for Women in collaboration with the South Carolina Commission on Women embarked on Phase

One of a long-term strategy with a three pronged approach:

(1) Decrease the pay gap between women and men by increasing the number of women-owned businesses and increasing the economic capacity of existing women-owned businesses.

(2) Increase the number of women in elected and appointed policy decision-making roles by identifying and supporting women interested in running for office and/or appointments to boards and commissions.



ment of Commerce, the Competitiveness Council, and the Palmetto Institute joined experts in entrepreneurship from Clemson University, the University of South Carolina, Claflin University, The Citadel, finance specialists and successful women entrepreneurs. This Think Tank studied the obstacles to women-owned businesses, reviewed national best practices in increasing the number and business capacity of women-owned businesses, and formed recommendations for legislation

The Think Tank on Women Entrepreneurs — Members pictured are (from bottom, left to right): Beth Stedman, Clemson University Economic Development Agent, Marion; Ann Marie Stiertz, Statewide Coordinator, Regional Education Centers, Columbia; Mary Baskins Waters; Haidee Stith, Executive Director, SC Women's Business Center, Columbia; Dr. Linda Salane; Bill Grimes, Business Development Corporation; Diane Sumpter; Evelyn Perry; Reka Moesteller, Aiken SBDC, Aiken; Caron St. John, Director, Clemson University Spiro Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership; Sarah Forbes-Jones, Assistant Legal Counsel, Governor's Office; Margaret Woodson, Coordinator, Office of Small and Minority Business Assistance, Governor's Office; Kristin Badger; Chuck Bundy, Senior Manager, SC Department of Commerce; K.D. Justyn, CEO, Aiken Regional Hospital

(3) Support existing organizations to improve the status of women in domestic violence, teen pregnancy, women's health and child advocacy through an electronic alert system.

To increase women's economic autonomy, The Columbia College Alliance for Women partnered with the Women's Business Center to create a statewide 25-person Think Tank on Women Entrepreneurs. Representatives from the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, the South Carolina Depart-

and programs to support small business development.

In addition, The alliance gathered data from more than 250 women entrepreneurs in regional meetings across the state. The data points to the fact that women-owned businesses are somewhat different than men-owned businesses. Many WOB are single entrepreneurs with no plan for growth. Fewer WOB are in the technology intensive clusters being developed throughout the state. And the



income from WOB is far less than the income from other small businesses.

Although South Carolina has many resources to support entrepreneurs with specific emphasis on technology intensive businesses, those resources are not available across the state and are not known throughout the state. The regional meetings pointed out specific needs of WOB in both start-up and growth phases:

- A central information point about resources for entrepreneurs

- A system to support new small business including a business start-up course, additional incubators and expanded WOB clusters

- Increased access to money and financial management assistance

- Access to systems to support business growth including an expansion of Fast Trac throughout the state and statewide assistance for international growth

- Access to affordable health insurance

- Mentoring system for women-owned businesses

Additionally, the Think Tank pointed out the need for a systematic educational focus on entrepreneurship in middle school, high school and college.

The Think Tank is now working with partner organizations to ensure that their recommendations are implemented. There are exciting initiatives across the state to connect women entrepreneurs with resources and support. The Alliance for Women is consolidating those resources into a Resource Center at [www.allianceforwomen.net](http://www.allianceforwomen.net). The next step in the plan will be to monitor the success of those initiatives by creating a system to identify and track women-owned businesses by geographic area and by business function.



President Caroline Whitson holds a framed copy of the resolution from the South Carolina General Assembly honoring Columbia College and The Alliance for Women. Introduced by Representative Laurie Slade Funderburk (D-Kershaw County) in March 2006, the resolution was co-sponsored by members of the Women's Caucus and other legislative friends of the college. The resolution recognizes Columbia College "for its outstanding public-private partnership, The Alliance for Women... and their longstanding commitment to improving the status of women in South Carolina."

The second prong of The Alliance for Women Phase One plan, to increase the number of women in policy level decision roles, led to the organization of a conference for women on boards and commissions. A Seat at the Table, a one-day conference held in May 2005 and March 2006, gathered women from across the state to learn more about the process of board appointment and to develop their skills in board leadership. The Alliance for Women also partnered with the Governor's Office to identify women for board appointments through an on-line Talent Bank. To register for the Talent Bank, go to [www.allianceforwomen.net](http://www.allianceforwomen.net).

The third prong of the Phase One strategy led to a close association with the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SCCADVSA), the Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Voices for South Carolina's Children, and the South Carolina Women's Health Coalition. The alliance monitored legislation and program support keeping women updated on

key issues and encouraging citizens to communicate directly with their legislator.

As the alliance enters the third year of activity, it is embarking on a strategic planning process to identify long-term strategies for change. That process will culminate in 2007 with an expanded plan of action for Phase Two of the alliance initiatives.

We began with imagining a better quality of life for all South Carolina's citizens in our lifetime with an improved status of women. Unless we are able to achieve what we now only imagine, the state can never be competitive in the global society and will continue to be caught in a cycle of limited resources.

So imagine one more time; imagine that you wake up and the newspaper headline reads: South Carolina Leads the Nation in Developing Women Leaders

Join us to help make that headline a reality! ■